ANECDOTES OF BOOKER WASHINGTON

He Was the Most Unsociable of Men, Yet His Humor Prevented Trouble on More Than One Occasion ---His Methods of Dealing With People

By TIMOTHY THOMAS FORTUNE.

DR. BOOKER T. WASHINGTON was a many sided man. He was at home with all sorts and conditions of men, from the President to the poorest black man in the shabbiest log cabin in the South. In whatever society, in whatever situation he found himself, he seemed to be perfectly at ease and without restraint.

And yet he was the most unsociable of men. He did not care for or cultivate the social side of life. He lived mostly with himself, even when surrounded by others, and preferred always to listen to the conversation of others than to talk. This trait enabled him to learn all there was to know of a person or a community by asking questions in the most diplomatic and persistent way.

If he were asked a direct question he did not want to answer he would seem to answer it without doing so, and then ask the person the same question, so disguised as not to be recognizable. When he got the other man to answering he would keep at it until he had learned all that he desired to know. Then he would change the subject, or separate himself in some way from the person.

Dr. Washington was on friendly terms with most of the prominent white men of Alabama, most of whom thought well of him and his work, and many of whom he was able to serve in a helpful way. Gen. Joseph Wheeler was one of these men. On one occasion, two years after the Spanish-American war, Gen. Wheeler wrote an article for a New York newspaper that Dr. Washington considered very unjust to the negro people. The Monday following the publication of it Dr. Washington entered a chair car in Jersey City for Washington. He had hardly seated himself before Gen. Wheeler entered the car and was shown to his seat. He then went directly to Dr. Washington's seat.

Dr. Washington and I stood up, facing the little soldier, and he introduced me to him. I sat down. Gen. Wheeler seemed very much disquieted and Dr. Washington had entered the car in a tired and nervous condition. Without asking him what he thought of the article he had written, Gen. Wheeler began to explain the reason for his writing it and Dr. Washington grew more nervous and restive as the explanation proceeded. Soon after we passed Trenton Dr. Washington, who had been standing and listening to the General for an hour, excused himself and went toward the smoking end of the car. Gen. Wheeler took his own seat and was soon buried in his favorite newspaper. He got off at Philadelphia and seemed to have forgotten that he had met Dr. Washington and had not finished talking to him.

After leaving Elkton I went forward to find Dr. Washington, but he was nowhere in sight. I asked the porter if he knew where he was and he said he had gone into one of the drawing rooms after leaving Gen. Wheeler and was fast asleep. We were approaching Baltimore before Dr. Washington emerged from the drawing room. "Gen. Wheeler is a very interesting character," he remarked, and said no more until we reached Washington.

Dr. Washington wrought a revolution in the habits and condition of the negro farmers of Macon county through the medium of the Tuskegee Farmers Conference, which was held annually, but he wrought it for the most part by introducing the farmers and their habits and conditions to themselves. In the conferences points of order were not allowed, neither were long talks. Five minutes was the time limit for each farmer. When he had read his little paper or made his little talk, Dr. Washington would take him in hand and, by diplomatic questioning, draw out of him all about himself and his affairs and those of his neighbors worth knowing.

When once the conference opened at 10 o'clock in the morning there was no hold up or recess until late in the afternoon, and when the conference finally adjourned everybody who had attended it would know all about his own affairs and those of his neighbors, but none of them knew more than Dr. Washington himself. This was one of the chief sources from which he derived his intimate knowledge of the condition and aspiration of the people of his race. He got it from them in these conferences by questioning them face to face. He turned the conference into an experience meeting at its inception, and it remained one, largely, at the time of his death.

The Business League, which was started in Boston in 1890, and of which Dr. Washington was the only president it ever had, was another of the sources from which he derived an intimate knowledge of his people and their wants and aspirations. During many years the experience meeting principle was strictly observed in the proceedings of the league; but some three or four years ago the growth of the membership in numbers and intelligence and wealth made it necessary to adopt the plan of department work, each department with its own working force, the chairman making an annual report to the general body. In this way all of the trades, professions and business enterprises are kept together and at work all of the year, and are able to exert the greatest influence and obtain the best and most accurate information necessary.

It took many years of meeting and catechising to bring the league membership up to this point of systematic and methodical work. After fifteen years of tireless work Dr. Washington made the National Negro Business League one of the strongest and most helpful organizations the Afro-American people ever had. The splendid business growth since the organization of the league is due almost entirely to Dr. Washington's peculiar facility of making them see their deficiencies and needs by talking about them in open meeting and inviting suggestions from them as to how their conditions could be changed for the better. He seldom volunteered to make a suggestion to them except by insinuating the answer in his questions.

Besides the knack of getting out of people all that he desired for his own information and their good Dr. Washington was a very courageous man with an abounding appreciation of the humorous and ridiculous, although he seldom smiled and was unable to laugh as other people do. His eyes would dance and sparkle when he was amused, but his lips would only twitch in a funny sort of way and his laugh would bubble out somewhat as a big sneeze. His eyes were long, like those of a Chinaman, and appeared never to be in a state of repose, darting here and there and seeming to concentrate upon nothing; but he saw everything, made mental note of it, put it to use in its place at the proper time. And he never seemed to be in a hurry.

Booker T. Washington.

Dr. Washington had no delusions about his leadership of the Afro-American people. He knew that he had acquired it without their consent by the character of the work he did as an educator and mediator between them and the white hostile public opinion of the Southern States. His right to speak for his race was hotly contested for fourteen years after he began work at Tuskegee Institute and until his memorable address at the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895, when the responsible newspapers of the country proclaimed his leadership. Then the greater part of his people sided with him, leaving an educated minority to oppose him, with Dr. E. B. D. Du Bois, now editor of the *Crisis* and a moving spirit in Mr. Oswald Garrison Villard's Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as leader. Most of these people are college trained men, whom Dr. Washington characterized as dreamers of things rather than doers of things. Boston was the hotbed of this opposition and remained so until the death of Dr. Washington.

Some time after President Taft had begun to consult Dr. Washington about all sorts of matters relating to his race and Dr. Washington had recommended many Southern white men for Federal appointments the discontent in Boston grew in rancor and volume and began to worry Dr. Washington, who was making Boston instead of New York his headquarters at that time. He decided to find out for himself what the real trouble was and asked me to issue invitations to the leading men of his race in Boston to attend a banquet at Young's Hotel. When seated at the banquet table the gathering was what is generally styled "grand and imposing." There was no mirth in the countenances of the diners, but there was a good appetite. That is a healthy sign.

At the proper time when the coffee and cigars were served I arose and told the diners that Dr. Washington had desired to meet them at the banquet table and at the proper time to have each one of them express freely his opinion of the race question and how best the race could be served in the delicate crisis through which it was then passing. Each of the speakers launched into a tirade against Dr. Washington and his policies and methods, many of them in lofty flights of speech they learned at Harvard University. The atmosphere was dense with discontent and denunciation.

The climax was reached when William H. Lewis, the famous Harvard football coach, told Dr. Washington to go back South and attend to his work of educating the negro and leave "to us the matters political affecting the race." Every eye was upon Dr. Washington's face, but none of them could read anything in it; it was as inscrutable as a wooden Indian's. When every one of them had had his say I called upon Dr. Washington to respond to the speakers who had unburdened themselves. Dr. Washington rose slowly, with a slip of paper in his hand, and said:

"Gentlemen, I want to tell you about what we are doing at Tuskegee Institute and in the Black Belt of Alabama."

For more than a half hour he told them of the needs and the work, without once alluding to anything that had been said in heat and anger by those to whom he spoke. He held them close to him by his simple recital, with here and there a small blaze of eloquence, and then thanking them for the candor with which they had spoken, sat down. They were all disappointed, as they expected that he would attempt to excuse himself of the things they complained.

At another time at one of the Tuskegee farmers' conferences, in 1894 I think, Gov. William C. Oates of Alabama was on the programme to make an address, and the multitude was expecting great things of him. He was not a polished speaker, although he had served a great many years in Congress. He was a rough soldier, who had lost an arm fighting for the Confederacy. He liked Dr. Washington, however, and his ideas about the industrial education of the colored people.

John C. Dancy, a college man, at that time Collector of Customs at Wilmington, N. C., was to speak before Gov. Oates, and I was to follow the latter. Mr. Dancy is an unusually bright and eloquent man. The two made a brilliant comparison between the Puritan civilization of New England and the Cavalier civilization of the South. Mr. Dancy paid a glowing tribute to the New England men and women who had built up the educational interest among the colored people after the war, of which the Hampton and Tuskegee institutes were lasting monuments. Mr. Dancy had plenty of applause from the great concourse of countrymen, but his address made Gov. Oates furious. When the Governor was called upon to speak he showed plainly that he was agitated out of his self-restraint. Without any introductory remarks whatever, he said, as I remember it:

"I have this written address for you," waving it at the audience, "but I will not deliver it. I want to give you niggers a few words of plain talk and advice. No such address as you have just listened to is going to do you niggers any good; it's going to spoil you. You had better not listen to such speeches. You might just as well understand that this is a white man's country, as far as the South is concerned, and we are going to make you niggers keep your place. Understand that. I have nothing more to say to you."

The audience was taken aback as much by the bluntness and vulgarity of the Governor's address as if they had been doused with cold water. Indignation was everywhere visible on the countenances of the people. But Dr. Washington appeared unruffled. On the contrary his heavy jaw was hard set and his eyes danced in a merry measure. It was a time to keep one's temper and wits, and he did so, as usual. Without betraying any feeling in the matter, and when everybody expected him to announce the next speaker, he said:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: I am sure you will agree with me that we have had enough eloquence for one occasion. We shall listen to the next speaker at another session, when we are not so fagged out. We will now rise, sing the doxology and be dismissed."

The audience did so, but it was the most funereal proceeding I had ever witnessed upon such an occasion. Dr. Washington's imperturbable good nature alone saved the day.

After the meeting of the Business League, in Chicago, in August, 1904, I think, Dr. Washington, who was much run down, planned to spend some weeks in camp on the Gauley River, in West Virginia. There were only half a dozen in the party. As soon as it was noised abroad that Dr. Washington was to go into camp in the State invitations poured in upon him to speak at various points in West Virginia. It was the State from which he had gone in his youth to seek an education, and the people wanted to see and hear him. But he accepted only two of the invitations, one at Charleston at the beginning and one at Montgomery at the end of his trip.

At Charleston the meeting and reception were held in the State Capitol and the addresses were by Governor McCorkle and former Governor Atkinson, the one a Democrat, the other a Republican, of high repute. Before he was called upon to speak Dr. Washington suggested that I make the long address for him, as he did not feel well, but I declined on the ground that the people wanted to hear him, who was one of them, and not me, about whom they knew nothing, and because I knew he was only guying me, to relieve himself of the pent-up humor which he had always to labor to keep in subordination.

When we got to the camp on the Gauley I was surprised to find among the articles Dr. Washington had ordered for his comfort was a big bathtub, which leaned conspicuously against his tent, thirty feet from the river. I did not say anything to him about it, and he never used it, but, rather, took his dip every morning in the running waters of the river. There were many visitors to the camp, mostly mountaineers, some of whom came many miles over the mountains to see him. One morning a long, lank mountaineer drove up to the camp, in a regular mountain rig, with two big horses. His 12-year-old son was with him. The man said to the one nearest him:

"I've come a matter of twenty-four mile to see that nigger Washington they say is camping hereabouts. Be you him?" Dr. Washington stepped forth and greeted the man cordially. "You see it's this way; I wouldn't go round th' corner ter see you, but they are teaching th' children in our school all about you and this 'ere boy of mine jest 'lowed that he had ter see you. So here we aire, and I'm mighty glad to see you."

Dr. Washington insisted that they alight and have breakfast and allow the stock to be fed.

"Well, I don't mind if I do. But only on condition. I never take nuthing from nobody without giving somothing; so if I eat your breakfast you'll have to accept this here watermelon I've fetched for you."

After breakfast we all strolled up the mountain road in the wake of Dr. Washington and the mountaineer and his son. The two men kept up an animated conversation. At one point the mountaineer asked:

"I suppose you be a Republican, Mr. Washington?"

"Why, yes; I've never been anything else," said Dr. Washington, rather doubtfully, as he did not of course know the politics of the mountaineer nor the reason for his asking the uesstion.

"Well, I'm glad to know it. I voted for Abe Lincoln and for every Republican since. I suppose these others aire Republicans?"

"All except my friend Fortune; he is an independent, and some call him a Democrat because he supported Cleveland against Blaine," said Dr. Washington, with a mischievous twitch of his mouth. The lank mountaineer, who had a big Smith & Wesson revolver buckled on him in plain view, sized me up, with a frown on his wrinkled face, and said:

"I'm very much surprised, very much. I cain't see how a nigger can be a Democrat. For my part I think every one of 'em ought to be shot wherever he be found."

The mountaineer dismissed me with that, and I did not answer. In parting from us several hours after the mountaineer shook hands with Dr. Washington and said:

"We're proud of you in this State, Booker, we be, an' I want you to know it, an' if you ever want real friends just you come back here and you'll find 'em in West Virginny."

On leaving the camp Dr. Washington was scheduled to make an address at Montgomery. The opera house was packed to suffocation and there were as many outside who could not get in as there were inside. Before the meeting began Dr. Washington had a "sinking spell," a species of dyspepsia that bothered him much, and was really too sick to speak when his time came. He asked me to speak for him, telling the mountaineers he would follow me. Dr. Washington was not witty, he was rather humorous in his makeup. He had need always of a yarn to illustrate what he had to say in order to keep his audiences in good humor. Instead of making an address I told the audience that I would entertain them with some of the jokes that Dr. Washington usually employed to illustrate the subject in hand. There were about twelve of these. I kept the audience laughing from beginning to end. I relate but two of them here.

When Dr. Washington first went to Tuskegee there was a local character in the village who had the reputation of being an expert chicken thief and who did not take to honest labor. Dr. Washington sent for him one day. When he came he said:

"Does yer wants ter see me, Purfessur."

"Why, yes; I have a job for you, as I hear that you are a handy man at odd jobs about the village. Do you want a job?"

"Yessah, ah wants de job, but ah must know fust what kinder job it is."

"It is this; I have a chicken coop I want to turn into a school room, and I want you to clean it out for me. Can you do it?"

"Say, Purfessur," whispered the man, "when does you want it done?"

"To-day, of course."

"You doan mean it, Purfessur; you doan mean it. Why, Purfessur, it would be wuff my repertation ter clean out a chicken coop in de day time."

Dr. Washington laughed heartily. He used to insist that there are plenty of prosperous people who are considered to be honest by their neighbors who are not as regardful of such reputation as they have as was the Tuskegee chicken thief.

Again, there was a colored farmer near Tuskegee who used to come on foot every Saturday at the same hour to get a side of Cincinnati white pork, in which there was never a streak of lean. He was a long, lank person, and the meat had worn all of the back off his shirt. He met a white countryman about the same place coming into the town as he was going out, who always eyed the colored man and his side of bacon curiously. At last, one Saturday afternoon, he halted his mule close to the colored man and said:

"Say, my man, I want tew ask yer er question."

"All right, boss, go right erhaid," said the colored man. "Yer kin ask me any questions yer wanter. Dat's a w'ite man's business."

"Ther question is this: I want ter know why you don't buy more shirt an' less bacon?"

"I'll tell yer boss, fur it am a easy question. Yer see it am dis way; I done found out er long time ergo dat you can promise de back, but de stomach doan take no credit."

And then Dr. Washington would preach a sermon on the necessity of negroes raising their own bacon and depending less upon the grocer. Most colored people are hearty eaters and disposed to slight outward appearances to satisfy their stomachs.

The Afro-American people will never have another Booker T. Washington to lead them, because there will not be again any slave condition out of which such a one can come, and because the Afro-American people themselves will never again require a leader to instruct and guide them in the rudiments of learning how to work, to save their money, to buy land and keep it and to cultivate the esteem of the white people of the South by their good citizenship.

RADOSLAVOFF THE REAL POWER IN BULGARIA

THE power behind the throne of Czar Ferdinand of Bulgaria is the Bulgarian Premier, V. Radoslavoff. This quiet, thoughtful man has been the deciding factor in the issue that is now turning the eyes of the world once more to the Balkans.

Just where the road that Radoslavoff has chosen will lead the near future will decide, but one thing is certain, and that is that no act of this Premier will ever subject Bulgaria to Russian dominance. From the very beginning of his political career Radoslavoff has vigorously opposed those factions that had a leaning toward Russia. He was convinced that Bulgaria could become a power through Bulgaria alone, and he has remained true to this conviction for more than thirty years.

Radoslavoff is a north Bulgarian and was born at Lovatz in 1854. He first attended school in Bohemia and finally studied law at Heidelberg and Vienna. Upon his return home he became a Judge. Friends who knew him in those days declare that he was a general favorite and beloved by the people because of his incorruptible sense of justice and his goodness, qualities which to this hour, especially in his intercourse with the peasant population, are characteristic of the man.

At the age of 30 Radoslavoff was chosen Minister of Justice under the Premiership of Karaveloff. He then belonged to those adherents of Stambuloff—the Bulgarian Bismarck—whose sole purpose was to free Bulgaria from her vassalage. When on that fateful night in August, 1885, Alexander of Battenberg, the first Prince of Bulgaria, was taken prisoner through a Russian conspiracy he carried with him to Rent the advice of Radoslavoff to keep himself in readiness to return to Bulgaria.

The counter revolution under Stambuloff and Mutkuroff restored the Prince to the nation late in August of the same year. Radoslavoff then came out strongly for a monorchical form of government for Bulgaria. But he was too late. His plan to make the Prince of Battenberg king failed owing to Alexander's weakness; and the man who had striven to free Bulgaria from Russian influence had to give up their ruler as he had given himself up in his letter of abdication to the Czar. This happened in September, 1886.

Then followed a regency with Stambuloff, Mutkuroff and Karavaloff in power. Under this regime Radoslavoff remained Minister of Justice and he opposed energetically the machinations of Gen. Kaulbars, a Russian agent, who had been sent to Sofia to stir up discord.

While Stambuloff and his co-regents ruled with an iron rod the friendship between the dictator and Radoslavoff began to wane. The Minister of Justice publicly declared that his convictions as to the needs of Bulgaria did not coincide with the policy pursued by the Government. This open avowal meant the breaking of old ties, and Radoslavoff started a party of his own, that of the Liberals.

Together with his followers Radoslavoff now began an earnest campaign that had for its purpose the political and social development of Bulgaria which, under the subsequent rule of Ferdinand of Coburg—the successor of the popular Alexander, and the present Czar—was progressing rapidly. What has been done in the past thirty years in Bulgaria constitutes a remarkable chapter in modern history. It was to pacify Russia, which was not pleased with the choice that the European Powers failed to recognize Ferdinand of Coburg as the Prince of Bulgaria until 1896, and it was not until 1909 that Bulgaria's independence became an actual fact.

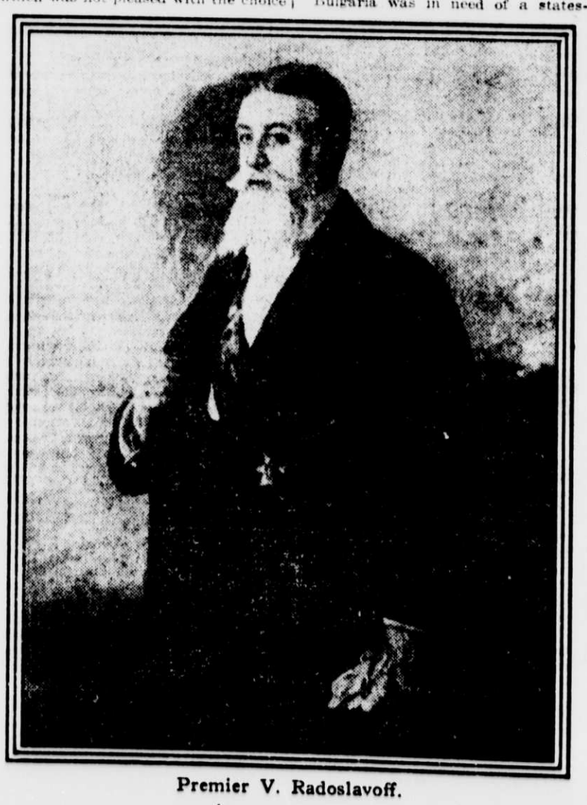
During all these troublesome times the personality of Radoslavoff, while dominating in Bulgarian political life, did not reach the outer world. At home every one knew at least of the righteousness, the stanchness, of the man whom the peasants, in his younger days, had called "the good judge." To the rest of Europe he was simply the leader of the Bulgarian Liberal party. As it happens with so many men that fail to thrust themselves into the limelight Radoslavoff was not recognized until the hour of trial, and this came when Geschoff and Daneff, after the misfortunes of 1913, had shot their bolt.

Bulgaria was in need of a statesman whose one thought was the welfare of Bulgaria and who was undaunted by the shadow of Russia. Such a man, in the eyes of Czar Ferdinand and the people, was Radoslavoff. Within two years this little Balkan monarchy, again raised its head under the statesmanship of Radoslavoff and took its place among the nations. To an embittered people he restored self-respect, and he awakened in them new powers of regeneration.

Opposed by intrigues from within and chicanery from without Radoslavoff was always master of the occasion. He has never been known to say one word too much nor one too little, and, although unlike Talleyrand in other respects, he knows how to use the latter's cynical diplomacy and to hide his thoughts by his manner of speech. Thus the leader of the Bulgarian Liberal party has gradually become one of Europe's foremost statesmen.

Scorned or flattered, as occasion demands, Radoslavoff, ever since the world war began, has found himself to be a power. Sometimes he is pictured as a cunning Oriental and again as a master diplomat. But both criticisms and praise leave him cold. His people love him for his simplicity and his single mindedness—"Bulgaria first and Bulgaria last" is his motto.

Radoslavoff's friendship for Germany is twofold: There are the sentimental and youthful memories that cannot be shaken off, and these are strengthened by the cooler reasoning of the man, who realizes, by comparison, the needs of his own country. The perfect organization of German social and military life convinced Radoslavoff that the integrity and the safety of the Bulgars depended among other things on a show of force.



Premier V. Radoslavoff.

THE RICHEST INDIAN GIRL.

SARAH RECTOR, a pure blooded Creek Indian girl, is said to own outright a greater number of oil wells than any other person in this country, and from them to have the largest income enjoyed by any resident of the State of Oklahoma. Her estate consists of about seventy acres of land, about two miles north of Pemenia, Okla., on the Cimmaron River.

A year ago this land was valued at $50 an acre. Then suddenly oil was discovered, and to-day forty-eight wells, producing a million barrels of oil a month, are being operated on her property. Her share, about $35,000 a month, is turned over each month to the Muskogee County Court. Miss Rector is described as a quiet, unassuming little Indian girl, who has received all her education in the reservation schools.